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Dolly Madison

Dolley Madison, born Dolley Payne, was a significant figure in American history, known for her influential role as First Lady and her vibrant personal life.

Professional Life

Dolley Madison served as the First Lady of the United States from 1809 to 1817, during her husband James Madison's presidency. She was renowned for her social skills and played a crucial role in shaping the role of the First Lady. Dolley was instrumental in hosting political events and

fostering bipartisan cooperation, inviting members of both political parties to her gatherings. She also helped furnish the newly constructed White House and is famously credited with saving Gilbert Stuart's portrait of George Washington during the War of 1812 when the British set fire to the White House.

Private Life

Dolley Madison was born on May 20, 1768, in Guilford County, North Carolina. She was raised in a Quaker family and married her first husband, John Todd, in 1790. They had two children, but tragedy struck in 1793 when her husband and one of their sons died during a yellow fever epidemic.

In 1794, she married James Madison, who was 17 years her senior. Their marriage marked a significant shift in her life, as she was excommunicated from the Quaker church due to her marriage to an Episcopalian.

After James Madison's presidency, Dolley faced financial difficulties, exacerbated by her son John Payne Todd's alcoholism and mismanagement of their estate. Despite these challenges, she remained a beloved figure in Washington, D.C., until her death on July 12, 1849.

Dolley Madison's legacy is marked by her charm, political acumen, and resilience, making her one of

the most highly regarded First Ladies in American history.